

Campus Buzz

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PU Proactive & Think Tank

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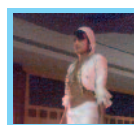
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YOUTH EXPRESS

The Gandhi touch



Photos: Centre for Electronic Media (CEM)

Rahul Gandhi, Member of Parliament (Amethi), was in his element during an interaction with PU students on Feb. 5, after inaugurating the Rajiv Gandhi Cricket Stadium in the university campus.

Mr. Gandhi fired a volley of questions provoking students to share their opinions on a wide range of topics, such as governance, education and democracy, "In India, if you know somebody in politics or if you have friends in the political system, you can easily enter politics. Otherwise, the political system in our country is inaccessible for most people."

"It is a paradox that in a seemingly democratic country like India,

political parties do not choose their leaders in a democratic manner," said Mr. Gandhi in the hour-long session.

"During elections in India, political parties don't allow the youth to be part of decision making. That's why we decided that there are going to be no nominations in the NSUI (National Students Union of India). It was with the aim to democratise the functioning of Congress youth organisation that we started internal elections in Youth Congress which has even been appreciated by our political opponents," he added.

Replying to a question that challenged the efficiency of the educational system in India, he agreed with a student's view that the



way of teaching should be practical, analytical and interesting. He also encouraged the idea of democratisation of classrooms, where the instructor is more of a friend than a teacher.

When asked about the activities of divisive forces, he said that only a small group in certain parts made divisive issues and that the majority believed they are Indians first.

Member of Parliament (Mandsaur) Meenakshi Natarajan, Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Chief Minister V. Vaithilingam, and the Director of Culture and Cultural Relations, Prof. A. Balasubramanian were also present at the function.

Talking about leadership continued on page 4>

Silver Jubilee Convocation

The twentieth convocation is being held on April 2 when 176 Gold medals, 13,572 Bachelors (including 5238 through distance education), 1499 Masters, 237 M. Phil. and 70 Ph.D. degrees will be conferred. Shri Kapil Sibal, Honourable Minister for Human Resource Development shall be the chief guest. Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) is being conferred to Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy; Shri Javed Akhtar,



renowned lyricist and author; and Prof. G. K. Chadha, CEO, South Asian University and former economic advisor to Prime Minister.

A bureaucrat with a difference

As a part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations 2009-2010, exemplary personalities from in and around India are being invited to deliver lectures in the university.

technological advancement that made communication easier.

Mr. Chawla played a key part in ensuring that the transgendered community gets the right to vote.

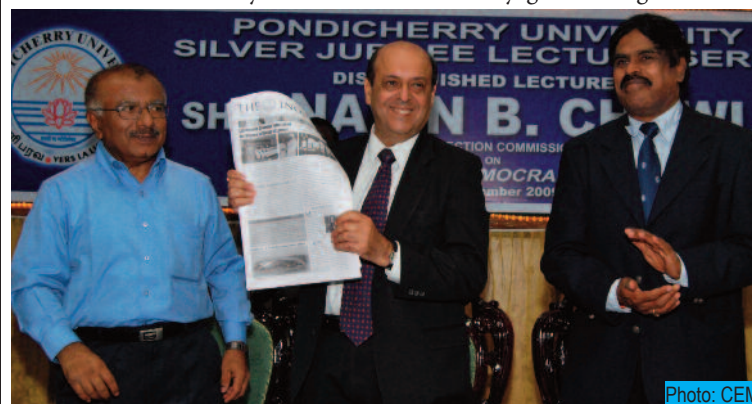


Photo: CEM

Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Mr. Navin Chawla and Mr. S. Loganathan.

Chief Election Commissioner, Navin Chawla delivered a lecture on 'Electoral Democracy in India', on Dec. 30, 2009.

No stranger to Puducherry, Mr. Chawla has a long-standing relationship with the town; he held two important posts with the Government of Puducherry, in 1979-80 and 2000-01.

Mr. Chawla is a humanist first and then a bureaucrat. Drawn to social service, he worked closely with Mother Teresa. Greatly influenced by her, he has authored a book 'Mother Teresa' and co-authored 'Faith and Compassion- The Life and Work of Mother Teresa' with Raghu Rai.

During the lecture, Mr. Chawla briefly explained the workings of the Election Commission. Pointing out the differences between the 2004 and 2009 elections, he appreciated the

Strongly advocating the need for social equity, he spoke about voting rights of those left out of the democratic process since they could neither register themselves as 'male' or 'female'. Now they can register themselves as 'other'.

He also spoke about the need to ensure the participation of under-trial prisoners in the electoral process- at present they are not allowed to vote, while they can stand for elections until they are convicted.

He enthusiastically answered questions raised by the students. When asked about educating the public about Clause 49'O, he replied, "It is important to educate the public and election officers about the election process." He urged the students to participate in the election process as booth level officers. He also launched THE INQUIRER's December 2009 issue.



Building model of MSGET unveiled

Dr. Farooq Abdullah, the world's only cabinet rank Minister of New and Renewable Energy, inaugurated the International Conference on "Green Energy Technologies: Challenges in Research and Human Resource

Development" on March 23. Dr. Madanjeet Singh, Founder of South Asian Foundation and UNESCO's goodwill ambassador shared his vision on green technology. A philanthropist and able visionary,



Dr. Madanjeet Singh, Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Prof. J.A.K. Tareen.

he with Dr. Farooq Abdullah inaugurated the Madanjeet School of Green Energy Technology. The foundation plaque and the building model was unveiled by them.

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Images from Antarghat- the vessel within, a series by Bandeep Singh that explores the symbolism of the clay pot in association with the human body.

A report on our interaction with Bandeep- artist, photojournalist and photo editor, on page 7.



Inkpot

THE INQUIRER brings to you a university that is moving on the fast track. Here, we unfold PU's proactive engagement in a wide range of activities. The Silver Jubilee celebrations brought us a distinguished lecture by Mr. Navin Chawla and many new beginnings that we are proud of.

We are happy that this issue of

THE INQUIRER is being released on PU's 20th convocation.

As the university opens its doors to researchers, professors and professionals globally, we celebrate the true sharing of knowledge; and reaffirm our contribution to it. Please do write to us with your news and views.

Radhika Khanna, Editor



News Briefs

The Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy organised a National Conference on 'Inclusive Perspectives for the Development of the Scheduled Tribes in India' from March 29-30. It earlier organised a National Conference on 'Public Action and Inclusive Policy: Taking Stock of the Reality and Exploring the Road Ahead' from March 22-24, with the financial assistance of UGC.

The Department of Performing Arts celebrated World Theatre Day. It conducted a seminar on 'Dynamics of South Indian Theatre' at studio theatre from March 26-27 and a one day seminar on 'Indian Theatre at Cross Roads' on March 30.

The Department of Social Work celebrated World Social Work Day on March 27 by organising the



Photo: Devanathan

'Ability Nite'. Differently abled students from six schools in Puducherry expressed their creativity and talent in it.

A National Workshop on 'Gender and Masculinities' was organised by the Centre for Women's Studies and Department of Social Work from March 25-26.

The Department of Pollution Control and Environment Engineering conducted 'Amrutham 10' on World Water Day on March 22.

The Department of English invited Prof. Satchidanandan, poet, critic and editor of Indian Literature

as Writer-in-Residence from March 10-20. A Creative Writing Workshop was also held on March 16.

The Department of Food Science and Technology inaugurated the Association of Food Scientists and Technologists and conducted a one day workshop on 'Future of Food Industries in India' on March 19.

The School of Education organised a National Conference on 'Education for Socially and Economically Deprived' from March 12-13.

A Musical Concert by French musicians, Baptiste Daleman & Co. and songs by the students of the French Department was conducted on March 12.

An International Seminar on 'Rajiv Gandhi's Disarmament Initiatives: Global and South Asian Contexts' was organised by the Centre for South Asian Studies from March 9-11.

The Department of Politics and International Studies organised a seminar on 'Political Economy of Development' from March 4-5.

The Centre for Bioinformatics hosted the International Seminar on 'Structural Biology' on Jan. 25.

The Department of Philosophy organised a National Seminar on 'Consciousness and Self-Identity' from Jan. 21-23.

The Memory STELE, installed by the UNESCO Chair of the University of La Reunion, was unveiled at the PU cultural complex on Jan. 22.

The Department of French organised an International Conference on 'From South India to the Islands of Indian Ocean: Indian Diaspora & Inter Culturality' from Jan. 20-22.

DNA barcoding workshop



A workshop on 'DNA barcoding: Identification of Flora and Fauna' was jointly organised by the Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences and the Department of Biotechnology from Feb. 22-23. This was to celebrate the

International conference on Microfinance

The Department of Commerce organised a three-day International Conference on Microfinance from Jan. 22-24.

Prof. Tareen suggested setting up a separate agency for the specialised marketing of Self-Help Groups' products. He also wanted the university to be involved in micro-finance by establishing a research cell.

Success stories from business enterprises, group activities and

community development were shared by Self-Help Group members from Madurai. They demonstrated how they live successfully with microfinance facilities with the support of NABARD. Ms. Amudha Shanthi from Thiagam Pengal Arakattalai, an organisation working exclusively for the welfare of differently abled rural women, showcased a film 'Securing Livelihoods for Differently Abled Women'.

Aarohan'10: Forum for students' creativity



Photo: Vishnu

PU ON SONG: One of the teams performs at the group song competition.

The Students' Welfare Wing conducted 'Aarohan- 2010'- an event consisting of literary and cultural competitions from March 2-8. The event kick-started with elocution, debate and quiz competitions. Students from various departments of the university participated in the events.

A music competition was organised on March 3, and saw an overwhelming response from the

Discussions in Anthropology

The Department of Anthropology organised a three-day seminar from Feb. 3-5 at the Social Science Seminar Hall.

Prof. Kamal K. Mishra, Professor of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad, was the Chief Guest. The topics under discussion were - Cognitive Anthropology: The use of Linguistic Epistemology in Cultural Analysis; Post-Modernism in Anthropology: Rhetoric and Reality; Inter-Jati Exchange Relations in Rural India: Towards a Theoretical Revisit and Globality; Globalization and the Tribes in India.

Research scholars and students from various departments attended the seminar.

Tourism Studies: UGC-SAP National Seminar

The Department of Tourism Studies organised a two-day National Seminar from March 19-20, on

"Creativity and Innovation in Tourism Entrepreneurship: Contemporary Trends." Papers were based on innovative concepts, research contributions with empirical evidence and case studies of successful business models and entrepreneurs.

The seminar concentrated on India's relative performance in tourism compared to other Asian nations like China, Malaysia and Thailand and emphasised on the need for creativity and innovation as the principal ingredients of entrepreneurship that are needed more than ever before. Both of these involve entrepreneurial initiatives targeted at the development of new destinations, innovations in tourism promotion and expansion

students. The event covered different categories, such as Vocal, Instrumental, Classical (Hindustani, Carnatic, Folk and Light) and

Group. The group performances included the genres of Western, Indian and Folk music.

Balayan (Folk) and Belormi (Hindustani) won first prizes in their events and became crowd-favourites for their enjoyable performances.

Other competitions were dance performances (classical, folk & choreography), skit, mime, painting (on canvas) and collage.

The essay competitions were organised on March 8 in Hindi, English and Tamil. The topic for the English essay competition was "News making vs. News faking".

Aarohan brought in a wave of energy & enthusiasm on the campus.

Women's football rules



Photo: CEM

The Department of Physical Education and Sports, Pondicherry University, organised its first ever South-West Zone Inter University Football Tournament for Women from Jan. 4-8.

Teams from various states, such as Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry took part and the four best teams

selected will participate in the All India Inter University Football Tournament for Women which will be organised by Kurukshetra University, Haryana.

During the inaugural function on Jan. 4, Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen said, "These games, between states will encourage national unity and understanding between the students."

Centre for Electronic Media & Mass Communication wins two awards & two citations in the 20th UGC-CEC Education Video Competition 2008 & the Competition of Centre for Environment Education (Vatavaran 2009) respectively.

and development of markets yet not explored.

Akanksha '10: dream it, do it

The Department of Tourism Studies also organised 'Akanksha '10-Looking Beyond' an annual event, from Feb. 20-21, in the School of Management building.



Photo: Agni

Students during the cultural at Akanksha.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Tareen inaugurated the function, and released 'Yatra' magazine, the annual publication of the department. Rakesh Mathur, President, ITC WelcomHeritage, New Delhi, was the Guest of Honour and he delivered the keynote address.

Since its conception in 1992-93, this Institute-Industry interface event has provided a platform for interaction between the industry and academia. This year's Akanksha saw the launch of the first Alumni Meet of the Department of Tourism Studies. A photography and painting exhibition showcased the creative work of the students.

It brought together CEOs, Directors, Tourism Administrators, Academicians and representatives from NGOs to deliberate on key issues and evolve practices in tourism and the hospitality industry through panel discussions and special lectures.

It consisted of three technical sessions- 'Tourism: Reaching out to the middle class', 'Civil Aviation: Expectations vis-à-vis Achievements' and 'Beyond Incredible India: Rebranding Indian Tourism.'

For coverage of activities in Campus Buzz, inform us at puinquirer@gmail.com

In Focus: Department of Performing Arts

In continuation of our section which is similar to the "Know your University" initiative on the campus, we are happy to showcase yet another department. This issue introduces our readers to the working and accomplishments of the Department of Performing Arts.

-Editor

The Department of Performing Arts started functioning from the academic year 1988-89. One of the most diverse and interesting departments of the university, it offers the following courses- M.P.A. (Master of Performing Arts), M. Phil, PhD and P.G.D.T.A (Post Graduate Diploma in Drama and Theatre Arts, an add-on course). These courses give students unique career opportunities in various fields like Film, Radio, T.V. Networks, and as faculty in educational institutions.

Students here, learn about Modern Indian Theatre, Western Theatre, Classical Indian Theatre, Direction, Theatre Acting, Advanced Acting, Theatre Architecture, Play Production, Children's Theatre, Theatre Games, Theatre Exercises, Theatrical Martial Arts, Theatre in Education, Set Designing, Lighting, Designing, Make-Up and Costume Designing, Folk Theatre, Theru-K-Koothu, Mime and Choreography, Mass Communication, Voice & Speech Training, Classical Music, Music for Theatre, Performance



Stills from: (top left) Paari Padukalam (top right) a Theatre-in-Education (TIE) production on environment (below) The Miser by Moliere.



Sound Designing, Film Acting, Film Theories & History, T.V. and Film Production, Script and Play Writing, Dance Theatre, Musical Theatre, Theatre Therapy, Experimental Theatre, Sculpture & Painting related to Theatre.

The department has good infrastructure and also has its own library with computer and internet facilities. In addition, there are three air-conditioned Studio Theatres which are well equipped with

lighting and sound. They have an open-air multipurpose theatre as well.

The department has been organising several workshops for the benefit of students. The major workshops organised in 2009 were a Children's Theatre Workshop from July 16-17 with Mr. Sumesh, member, Theatre in Education Company, National School of Drama, New Delhi as the resource person; a Theatre Jam Workshop in collaboration with Theatre Mara

from Oct. 10-11 at Bangalore; a ten-day Theru-K-Koothu Workshop from Oct. 19-27 with Sambanda Thambiran, Secretary, Purasai Kannappa Thambiran Theru-K-Koothu Manram, Purasai as the resource person; and a one-week Physical Theatre Workshop from Nov. 2-9 by Jairo Vecgara Fruto and Yasmin from Colombia.

In 2010, a workshop on Triple S (Script, Scenes and Shots) was conducted in the department studio

from Feb 15-16. Lectures on Script, Scenes and Shots were delivered. Three Sangalian Award winning short films connected to Sri Lankan issues and videos related to Script, Scenes and Shots were screened.

They also organised a series of seminars and drama productions in the recently concluded World Theatre Day celebrations on March 27, stimulating thought and creativity on the campus.

(as told to THE INQUIRER)



Kashmir University media faculty engage PU's communication students

Education has no boundaries. This was demonstrated when Ms. Muslim Jan and Ms. Syeda Afshana, came all the way from Media Education Research Center (MERC), Kashmir University to Pondicherry University to share their thoughts regarding emerging issues in media.

In a two-day workshop which was held on Jan. 23 and 25, students got an insight into the real problems of Kashmir and the role of media.

Discussing "Role of Media in Conflict Transformation in Kashmir," Ms. Syeda Afshana said that Kashmir is currently undergoing conflict transformation. Reporting any conflict is a challenging task for media personnel. "Professional



Students and faculty with Ms. Muslim Jan (fourth from right).

journalists do not set out to reduce conflict, although good reporting often reduces conflict," she said. Good reporting, according to her, is a debatable topic and there is no proper yardstick to measure it. During the discussion she spoke on

plight of Kashmiri women whose husbands went missing, whom she called 'half-widows'. She also mentioned that there are more than 100 orphanages in Kashmir.

According to her, journalists in the country are not doing justice to

conflict-reporting. "Their reports rarely incorporate the entire context of the matter. The media should focus on both the non-violent and the violent sides of the issue."

She further said that the people of Kashmir had realised that violence was not the answer to their problems and that the media in Kashmir should take responsibility to overcome these issues. She showed some photos and clippings related to this as well.

In her discussion about "Propaganda and its Techniques" she explained, "Propaganda is systematic brainwashing and it is designed to provide focus for our mistrust and hatred, to dehumanize the enemy so

that they can be killed without remorse." She also highlighted the different techniques of propaganda and linked the term to the situation in Kashmir.

Later in the day, Ms. Muslim Jan talked about the role one should play in conflict resolution as a media professional. "One needs to put him/her in that position to understand the problems and to seek out a peaceful solution to the problem," she added.

A film, Working on the Edge, an EMMRC MERC production, was also showcased. This was followed by an interactive session between the KU professors and the students of Media and Communication, PU.

Photo: Gopi

Let's go Green!

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Felicitations were given by Prof. V. Renugopalakrishnan, Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston and Dr. A. Balasubramanian, Director, Culture and Cultural Relations, Pondicherry University.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Abdullah said that this conference is



Photo: CEM

INTERACTIVE MOMENTS: Dr. Farooq Abdullah with children during cultural.

important not only for India but also for the world. "Due to the energy consumed by the West, the world is suffering from global warming. We have to co-operate with the rest of the world too. Whatever we make, we must supply to the countries that are not so developed and are in need of those resources," he said.

In a country where even today 40% of the people have not seen an

"You must have that feeling in your heart that you are not doing it for yourself but for the future of India- for children yet not born."

-Dr. Farooq Abdullah

electric bulb, he emphasised on the need to groom green energy from natural sources- the sun, water, earth, fire and ether- all that have been venerated and sustained life from the beginning of time. "Even though fossil fuels cannot be done away with, there is an imperative need to harness energy from solar, solar-thermal, tidal and other alternative sources; and which could only be achieved with the development of human resources," he added.

He aired concern on the tremendous amount of loss incurred by the nation due to dishonesty and the pilfering of money. He urged the youth to work with dedication. "You are the builders of the India of tomorrow. Your heart must ache. You must have that feeling in your heart that you are not doing it for yourself but for the future of India- for children yet not born."

Empowering the differently abled

On March 8, the Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy organised an interactive capacity building programme for the differently abled students of the university. This was another step by the Centre in carrying out action-oriented research that can lead to policy suggestions for the 'socially excluded groups'.

Faculty member, A. Chidambaram, who has been actively researching on disability, conducted a survey within the university to identify differently abled students on the campus. These students were invited to participate in the capacity building programme.

Following Dr. Abdullah's inspiring call to the youth, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Tareen gave the presidential address. Fittingly introduced by Dr. Uma Chandrasekaran, MC, as an institution builder and a mover and shaker who moves mountains by shaking everyone out the status quo, Prof. Tareen spoke about the genesis of the centre. He said that universities have a big role to play in contributing to society and can't be islands in isolation. "They need to proactively participate and develop a strong research base in the country," he added.

"If institutions of excellence are needed, we don't need people who sleep. PU is the fastest growing university in the country and has opened its doors to researchers, professors and professionals globally," he said. This important event in the annals of PU's history ended with presentation of vote of thanks by the Registrar, Mr. S. Loganathan. He lauded Prof. J.A.K. Tareen's leadership which demonstrates that all miracles are possible with selfless dedication.

The three-day conference concentrated on: i) sustainability-meeting the needs of society in ways without damaging or depleting natural resources, ii) innovation-developing alternatives to technologies to those that have been demonstrated to damage health and the environment, iii) reducing waste and pollution by changing patterns of production and consumption.

It focussed on alternative energy sources, green devices, green chemistry, nano-biotechnology and green management techniques. A team of scientists from industry and academics from India and abroad addressed the students, researchers and scientists.

This event witnessed the coming together of the best of minds to ensure a better world through the use of Green Energy Technology.

Mr. Elangovan, Deputy Director, Department of Social Welfare, Government of Puducherry, and Mr. Anburaj, Vocational Guidance Officer, District Rehabilitation Centre, Nagapattinam were the key speakers.

Mr. Elangovan spoke on the different welfare schemes available for differently abled persons and Mr. Natrajan spoke on the different Acts for persons with disability. The event was also aimed to create a platform for differently abled students to meet in order to create a forum to organise similar events in the future.

Women of the world forge ahead

The Centre for Women's Studies celebrated Women's Day on March 8 in J.N. Auditorium, which was followed by a Film Festival till March 12. The theme for this year, also the 100th year of International Women's Day, was 'Looking back and moving forward'. The Chief Guest, Ms. Sumita Kandpal, a retired IAS officer and member of the Mahila Samakhya, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Prof. D. Sambandhan, Dean, School of Social Sciences and International Studies, and Dr. Usha V.T., Reader and Coordinator, Centre for Women's Studies shared the dais. The Centre also celebrated its tenth year of inception.

Dr. Usha stressed on the need to highlight women's issues, which needed to be discussed and given ample importance. In addition, Ms. Sumita Kandpal talked about

ANANDA RANGAPILLAI LIBRARY

(en)abling access



To focus on the information needs of the visually-impaired, an experimental initiative has been taken by the Ananda Rangapillai Library. One terminal at the online reference section is provided with essential software and hardware to enable visually impaired students/scholars to browse/access e-content with ease.

A demo during the recent AAA Committee visit by Ms. Karkuzhali, a scholar from the English



Photo: Bagalavan

department was largely appreciated by members. Students of class II and IV of the Kendriya Vidyalaya, situated in the PU campus, took a tour of the university with their teachers. They visited the library, which motivated the children to read. Their interest was kindled and they were curious to know if they could become members of the library and were happy to note that a children's library was coming up soon.

The Vice-Chancellor also offered some interesting views regarding the negative portrayal of women in the media, especially in soap operas. He emphasised the role of education in women's

empowerment, and the need for them to break out of the stereotypes created by society.

He also released two books- 'Women and Moral Policing in India' and 'Gender Violence: Some Primary Facts'. The talk was followed by the screening of a documentary called 'Twilight at Home', produced by the Centre for Women's Studies.

The Gandhi touch

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qualities, Rahul Gandhi said that every student has the capability to be a leader and a teacher should encourage him/her and bring out that potential. "Curiosity is the key to be a leader," he added.

As he mingled with the students after the session, on his way out he devoted about a quarter-of-an-hour with Vijayata, a differently abled student of PU (for more on Vijayata see Vol. 1 No. 4 of THE INQUIRER on the website).

Vijayata took the initiative and asked Mr. Gandhi what were his ideas for offering solutions to problems faced by the differently abled in the country.

In a detailed discussion that followed Vijayata was asked for her suggestions. Few days after the session Vijayata also sent an abstract to Meenakshi Natarajan and awaits a positive reply.

On and off the dais, Mr. Gandhi formed an instant rapport with the students. He reaffirmed his capacity to connect with the youth of today.

Eco-friendly solutions

The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology organised a two-day Silver Jubilee National Symposium on Ecosustainable Management of Plant Diseases. It was held from March 12-13.

Prof. B. Kannabiran, Coordinator, stated that the excessive use of synthetic pesticides has led to environmental pollution through the accumulation of toxic residues in the soil, water and food.

He also talked about the resulting consequences and stated that the environment needs to be safeguarded by reducing the use of synthetic pesticides. This can be done by switching to eco-friendly pesticides and alternative fertilisers that do not harm the environment.

DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS

European Convention on Human Rights

The International Colloquium on the 'European Convention on Human Rights: Lessons from Experiences', organised by the Department of Politics and International Studies, in collaboration with the University of Paris 13, France, took place from March 1-3.

The colloquium catalysed an intense and a long awaited discussion on human rights and their violations plaguing the international context in general and the European, South Asian and the Indian contexts in particular.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, in his informative Presidential Address, said that the contours of Human Rights perceptions vary from community to community and he stressed on the necessity to include this within the

scheme of things. Prof. Mohannan Bhaskaran Pillai, Head of the Department, brought to the fore the reality of the idea and discussed the practice of non-American and non-European perspectives on Human Rights.

The deliberations encompassed several important issues related to women, minority rights, environmental issues and media. Focus was also given to forced marriages and anti-terrorism laws on human rights as well as the fundamental freedom of expression as practiced by the media and the violation of its rights by media personnel.

Students were given the opportunity to participate as panelists and share their ideas with the academic community.



Remembering Sri Aurobindo

A National Conference on ‘Re-reading Sri Aurobindo’ was organised by the Department of English from March 4-5 to mark the centenary of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival in Puducherry. Pondicherry University saw a confluence of people from all over the country, including an unusual mix of academics, devotees and research scholars. It was a gathering to engage with Sri Aurobindo with a fresh perspective, to re-read his work and be inspired again.

Prof. Murali, offering an overview of the conference, said that this was an occasion to try and look at the person, who has contributed so much to our understanding. He said, “It is my argument that Sri Aurobindo was essentially a poet.”

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Manoj Das, from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and a recipient of the Padma Shri for his contribution in literature. He opined that, “To present the mystic thought of India through a language that is not Indian, has been Sri Aurobindo’s contribution, along with writings on poetry, sociology and a wide range of subjects. Sri Aurobindo’s main contribution was to the vision of the

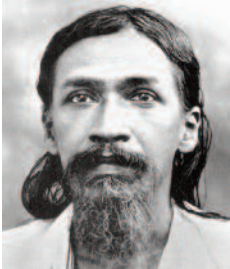
future of man- from liberation of India from foreign rule to the liberation of man from ignorance- he brings a touch of fulfilment to all disciplines.” He also narrated an evocative story on human greed in his inimitable style and said, “The greatest freedom is defeating the secret demon within our conscience.”

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen stressed on the need to have convergence between disciplines, including understanding of mysticism and noble thoughts that make universal education possible.



Delegates and organisers at the The 'National Conference on Re-reading Sri Aurobindo.'

He announced that the Sri Aurobindo School of Eastern and Western Thought would be activated



THE INQUIRER pays tribute to Sri Aurobindo, a great visionary & spiritual leader, on the occasion of the centenary celebration of his arrival in Puducherry on April 4.

and also proposed an evening Diploma course in Sri Aurobindo Studies. He also expressed that the

Ashram. His plans were met with much applause and appreciation.

There were many eminent Sri Aurobindo scholars at the conference: Dr. Prema Nandakumar, Prof. Makarand Paranjpe from JNU, Dr. Ananda Reddy of SACAR, Ms. Shraddhavan, Mr. Georges Van Vrekhem and Dr. Rod Hemsell. Most of them stressed on the need to re-read Sri Aurobindo. The sessions covered a vast range of topics: Sri Aurobindo’s poetry and poetics, philosophy, his epic poem Savitri, the foundations of Indian culture, yoga and metaphysics, drama,

on the need to evolve an integral hermeneutics to read Sri Aurobindo. Questioning the role of the mind in this endeavour, he spoke of the blocks which came about due to exceptionalism, which led to totalitarianism, and also of the concentration/contraction of the entire project on two individual persons: Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Another point of view was presented by Dr. Ananda Reddy who spoke of the binaries of hagiography and historiography, which he dismissed as intellectual jugglery, and the need to rise above it by re-reading Sri Aurobindo in silence, involving an inner re-reading.

One of the most passionate papers came from PU’s Finance Officer, Mr. S. Raghavan who offered a fresh and novel reading of Sri Aurobindo and Wordsworth’s poetry. The conference ended with a round table discussion, which revolved around the question of collective and individual yoga; the relevance of Sri Aurobindo today and the different perspectives with which we could engage with his texts in the contemporary world.

Ketaki Chowkhani (Alumna, Department of English, PU), Radhika & Rohan

Emerging Trends in Media: Digital Culture and Information Society

The Centre for Electronic Media & Mass Communication organised a two-day national seminar on “Emerging trends in Media: the Rise of Digital Culture and its Impact on Information Society” from Jan. 21-22.

The seminar was inaugurated by Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Dr. R. Sreedher, Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi and Shri R. Mahadevan, former Chief Editor, BBC World Service, London.

In his keynote address, Dr. Sreedher discussed the transitions that this knowledge society is undergoing and said that things are changing with the rise of digital culture. He also talked about the lack of emphasis on the role of education in media.

The seminar gave a platform to all the participants to understand the impact of technology on culture and society from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

It consisted of nine technical sessions on the topics: Mobile Technologies: A New Media Perspective, Internet and Online Culture, Social Media, Development Communication, ICT and Development, New Media Journalism, Television/Film in Transition, Print Media & Radio and E-learning.

We share here some of the important developments in media with our readers:

MOBILE CULTURE

Cell phones are ubiquitous today- everyone from the mailman to the corporate executive owns one. Cell phones have completely changed the way people communicate. They also have a



greater role in developing countries like India, where mobile technology has cut across economic and social backgrounds. It has helped in quick communication whether at the time of a natural disaster or in helping farmers be aware of crop prices.

NEW MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA

New Media is one of the most researched and revolutionary forms of media today. An interesting idea put forth in the seminar was that of the future of new media. Augmented reality is a growing area in virtual reality research and generates a composite view for the user. It is a combination of real scenes viewed by the user and a virtual scene generated by the computer that augments it with additional information.

Social media is yet another form of new media that consists of social networking sites, professional networking sites, blogs, micro blogs, forums, video blogging, book-marking, photo sharing etc. Sites such as Myspace, Facebook, and



Twitter have completely changed the way people communicate. Social media thus plays a vital role in participatory journalism, paving the way for registering opinions and wider social interactions.

TELEVISION IN TRANSITION

With the advent of broadcasting technology, television is heralding a new era in digital media. DTH (Direct-to-Home) is the revolutionary platform in satellite channel broadcasting technology, that offers users a wide range of programming options and makes TV viewing a pleasurable and interactive experience. In two decades, a series of economic and political changes have contributed to the globalisation of the television as a medium and as an industry. With over 300 satellite television

channels, India is poised to become the home of the largest number of viewers in the world.

In addition, international media conglomerates are taking over companies and rolling out new formats in television production. For

instance, Warner Bros. has recently started aligning its business with the Bollywood film industry. ICT- INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT is the buzzword for development today. It empowers people to find, explore, analyse, exchange and present information responsibly and without discrimination. It also gives users quick access to ideas and experiences from a wide range of people, communities and cultures.

ICT also plays a vital role today in empowering the differently abled. It attempts to help in many ways such as capacity building, enriching learning opportunities and providing access to knowledge. It is complementary to learning, and

helps improve life skills. Thus, ICTs have impacted society on many levels.

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Development communication is a communication strategy used to promote social development. The most pressing issues covered under this are related to sustainable development. Environmental issues can be addressed through awareness and activism which can be made possible through various forms of communication (interpersonal, group, organisational, mass, etc). Social debates can be initiated to discuss these issues using both traditional and mass media. Awareness about HIV-AIDS and other important issues can also be generated through various development communication programmes targeted at different strata of society.

E-LEARNING

E-learning refers to various forms of technology-enhanced learning. It is also called online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, networked or web-based learning. Modern technology has made learning very easy and effective. Numerous websites, on-line teachers, EDUSAT, videos and animations have opened a wide range of opportunities for students to explore. Particularly in the area of Distance Education, E-learning can prove to be a very useful tool for knowledge dissemination.

Values to help each other

On occasions you want to help someone and you ask yourself: “How can I help my friend or this family member who is depressed?” When you don’t want to help yourself it is difficult for anyone else to help you. When someone does not want to help themselves and is not prepared to make the effort to come out of that state, the way in which we can help is to be like a sun, to shine and give off light. If someone wants to take the light, let them open their windows and take the light and, if not, they will continue to be closed away in the house in the dark. But even then they know that outside there is light.

The best way to help is to free yourself of negativity, blockages and inner fears, and that way you

generate an environment in which people are not afraid, they feel themselves unblocked and natural with you, they relax and feel comfortable with you. In that environment their most positive part can emerge, their inner leader, their inner ruler. Being yourself, not honouring others because you want something from them, but rather loving them, allowing them to open themselves to their true being can help in generating bridges and not walls.

To build more bridges and fewer walls you need:

To trust. Learn to trust because trusting yourself, others and life opens you up to unimaginable possibilities. Don’t worry if someone deceives you, if the other is not honest, if this, if the other... Stop putting conditions with the “ifs” and act.

Faith. Jump over the barriers, don’t turn them into excuses. If you don’t accept challenges, your life will be of a “boring security”, whose base is the fear of the new and of change. It may appear secure and comfortable, but it is an illusory security, that may be broken at any moment and in any way.



Acceptance. Mistakes, failures, upsets, disappointments, are part of growth and of

knowing the process, and they should not be condemned or feared. Each human being has passed or is passing through them, and it will continue to happen.

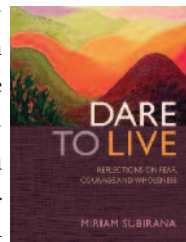
Remain light. Everything has its meaning and significance. If not today, in the end you will understand that meaning. It is healthy both for the mind and the body not to weigh oneself down with exaggeration and a lack of perspective.

Life is a game. Know the rules and play it well. A good player is aware, easy, tolerant and flexible, does not stay trapped into a scene, a norm or another player for much time; they give respect and attention, but continue going forward. A good player plays their role and does not try to play that of others.

Respect for being. Recognise

your spiritual reality as a human being, with some good inner resources that you should discover and use. Don’t accept false external supports, such as name, fame, position, praise. You are what you are because of what is within you. The point of reference is the eternal and valuable, and it is inside you. So you cannot fear that it will be spoiled.

Silence and positive attitude. Realise the importance of being silent from time to time, to re-examine and renew positivism towards yourself and towards life. If not, the speed and immensity of the negative forces of being, or of others, will make you fear again.



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Let’s eradicate Polio once and for all

The polio virus today continues to thrive in the world in four endemic countries- Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. What are the challenges and what needs to be done to eradicate polio from India? Recognising the important role of the media, UNICEF, in technical collaboration with the National Polio Surveillance Project-India (NPSP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) organised a workshop for Professors of Journalism and Mass Communication in Bangalore from Feb. 15-18.



Mr. Deepak Gupta of UNICEF stressed on the need for strategic communication for behaviour change. Pointing out the need for result-based communication, he said that the media campaigns needed to be systematic, planned and sustained to effect social change.

Prof. J.S. Yadav, Director, International Media Institute, emphasised on the social responsibility of journalists to contribute to development communication rather than focusing on negative news.

Information about polio eradication was shared in technical sessions by NPSP officers Dr. Pavan Murthy and Dr. V.N. Holla. Speaking about those most likely to be affected by polio, they said new-born babies, and other children up to five years of age, are at maximum risk. Therefore, the children need routine immunisation with the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV)- two drops supplemented by repeated doses at least six more times to provide complete protection against polio. Since there

is no cure for polio, it could only be prevented by giving OPV and by reducing risk factors that help the polio virus to spread.

The movement to eradicate polio is the largest public health campaign the world has ever seen. The need to give OPV to children is communicated to parents in rural areas through interpersonal communication. This effort is made by the thousands of community mobilisers belonging to the Social Mobilization Network (SMNet). They realised that nothing beats the familiar face, the eye contact, the lilt of the local dialect and the genuine concern of the friendly neighbourhood aunt who visits your home and asks after the health of your little one.

SMNet has played a major role in the containment of polio since 2001. Formed by UNICEF and CORE, it is a network of door-to-door grassroots crusaders, reaching out to families in polio-endemic and high-risk areas in UP and Bihar.

The role of media is crucial in the polio eradication campaign.

Polio experts said that keeping good personal hygiene and sanitation conditions, reducing diarrhea, ensuring better nutrition for children, and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months after birth can help improve the polio vaccine efficacy. For this, the government needs to provide proper water supply, sewage and toilet facilities, they added.

Although the pulse polio campaign in India has reduced the cases from 200,000 in 1978 to 732 in 2009, persistent efforts are needed to make the country polio free. Civil society too needs to press upon the government to ensure proper facilities, especially to sections of the society living amidst poverty.

The teacher participants were sensitised to ground realities by film screenings and field visits to an urban health centre, a slum and an

anganwadi centre at Malleshwaram. They interacted with auxiliary nurse midwives, a lady health visitor and a lady medical officer, as well as slum

Technically advised by the WHO, UNICEF manages the overall communication strategies.

It has been able to generate a high degree of visibility by enlisting the support of celebrities. Media campaigns featuring film stars and cricketers with the slogan ‘do boond zindagi ki’ and the tagline ‘har baccha har bar’ have been immensely successful.

The media has the power to clear doubts and misconceptions, report facts, emphasise the benefits of polio immunisation, mobilise support, underline issues and raise participation among the general public. It can inform, remind and persuade families to act and to stimulate the forces that make a difference in this field. The polio eradication programme could be and should be a subject for talk shows, case studies, documentaries, discussions and educational films.

dweller to get an understanding of key aspects related to polio.

The field visit reflected India’s success story of the immunisation of 172 million children by 2.3 million health workers and volunteers who visited 200 million houses nationwide. Despite grappling with poverty and underdevelopment, India has made tremendous leaps in the eradication of polio through the dedication of millions of volunteers and anganwadi workers.

So what can the media do to pitch in for this cause? Budding journalists, film makers and media practitioners need to be informed about facts related to the spread and control of the polio virus. It is hoped that the media task force will create innovative communication campaigns so that each child will be healthy and safe from the disability caused by polio.

Radhika & Sukanya

Suicide: the path to nowhere

Suicide is defined as the deliberate killing of oneself. It is a problem that affects people of all age groups, but mostly adolescents and young adults. During adolescence, the documented rates of suicide attempts are higher than at any other time in the human lifespan.

Adolescent suicide is a sensitive issue for society to think about and discuss, but it can often be prevented. Experts have put forward various reasons for the dismal state of mental health among people. Some of these reasons, which mental health experts term as ‘acute stress factors’, include family conflicts, academic failures, unemployment, unfulfilled romantic ideals, alcohol abuse and a voracious appetite for high-end consumer goods.

For the overwhelming majority who engage in suicidal behaviour, it is probably an appropriate alternative resolution to their precipitating problems. Suicide is often considered a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

It is estimated that over 1 lakh people die by suicide in India every year. Our country alone contributes to more than 10 percent of suicides in the world. The suicide rate in India has been increasing steadily and has reached 10.5 (per 1 lakh of population) in 2006, registering a 67 per cent increase from 1980. Out of every three cases of suicide reported every 15 minutes in India, one is committed by a youth in the age group of 15-29.

India grapples with infectious diseases, malnutrition, infant and maternal mortality and other major health problems and hence, suicide is accorded a lower priority. Mental health services are inadequate for the needs of the country. For a population of over a billion, there are only about 3,500 psychiatrists. Rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and emerging family systems result in

social upheaval and distress. Inability to cope with the pace and to live up to expectations results in depression, a silent killer, which leaves people vulnerable to suicidal behaviour.

There is an emerging need for external emotional support. The enormity of the problem combined with the paucity of mental health service has led to the emergence of NGOs in the field of suicide prevention. The organisations working in this field include Befrienders, a voluntary organisation with 31,000 volunteers in almost 40 countries that lends emotional support to people undergoing stress and helps prevent suicide.

Befrienders centres in India are Roshni in Secunderabad, Saath in Ahmedabad, Maithri in Kochi, The Samaritans in Mumbai, Aasra in Navi Mumbai, Sumaitri in New Delhi, Sneha in Chennai, Lifeline Foundation in Kolkata and Maitreyi in Puducherry.

India holds the second position in terms of highest rate of suicides.

Kerala, the country’s first fully literate state, has the highest number of suicide cases- 32 deaths per day.

In the Union Territory of Pondicherry at least 15 youth, between the age of 15 and 25, commit suicide every month.

Speaking to Mr. K. Kumar, Director of Maitreyi, Puducherry, we learnt that whenever there is a problem, people usually stop communicating with all those around, which is not a solution. “One should speak about one’s problems. Let people know because there is always a way out!” he added.

With the interventions of these organisations, we can prevent suicide. Proper counselling accompanied with love and care can help the person evolve and be able to take life as it comes. Bagalavan & Varisha

Ramli Ibrahim: an artist at work

The beauty of Odissi was explored in a creative way in the programme ‘Spellbound: A tryst with timeless Odissi’ on Feb. 9, at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Theatre, Puducherry. Ramli Ibrahim and his 7-member Sutra Dance Theatre group from Malaysia, resplendent in their majestic attire, gave a riveting performance.

It combined influences from different dance forms and mesmerised the audience. Truly multicultural in its essence, it was choreographed and interpreted to suit the contemporary context, and brought forth the idea that art forms go beyond geographical boundaries.

Overall, it was wonderful to see a Malaysian troupe adapt and perform Odissi, with so much aesthetic as well as artistic finesse.

Ramli’s art, however, transcends the merely aesthetic. In his own work as well as his teachings to his students, he aims to use dance as a platform for public awareness about

contemporary and classical art.

Ramli’s perception about the process of teaching is different and unique. In an earlier Narthaki online interview he said, “ I love teaching. I can spot a student’s latent talent waiting to be extracted, to express itself. I want to nurture that talent. I don’t like people diving at my feet!

Whatever you do, you must start with a pure inner heart, not just an outward ritualistic show. When it comes to a performance or class, if they don’t come up to expectations or make me wait, they get hell from me. That’s the guru in me. If you do not have respect for your art or for your parents’ money, why are you

wasting my time and yours? That’s why we have performed very few *arangetrams* and we do not recommend it unless the student is serious about making dance a very important part of his/her life.”

Talking about artistic freedom and promoting traditional dance, he said, “I want to see Dance with a capital D,” meaning that he wants to see it elevated as a much higher form of art than it is currently.

One of the most famous lines by the great poet W.B. Yeats came to mind on watching this ‘spellbinding’ performance: ‘O body swaying to music/O brightening glance/How can we know/The dancer from the dance.’

Nandini & Sukanya



Painting by Late Pather Velai Ramanathan

Thirukkural is a classic collection of *Kurals* (couplets) authored by Thiruvalluvar. It expounds various aspects of life and is one of the most important works in Tamil- also called “*Ulaga Podhu Marai*” (the Common Knowledge for the world) as it does not advocate any specific religion. Above is the English translation of a couplet from Chapter 60 in *Thirukkural* along with its visual representation rendered by an artist.

“With rising water the stem of the lotus unwinds; The dignity of men is measured by their minds.”

The Language of Photography

A booming laugh, a rather quirky sense of humour and an aura of passion and a lot of dedication characterised

Mr. Bandeep Singh, Photo Editor of India Today, as he came to the classroom to interact with the students of M.A. Mass Communication on Feb. 11. The interaction was open, informal and illuminating.

One of the first things he said about photography was that it could not truly be ‘taught’ in a classroom setting. He emphasised that while the technical aspects are taught in the photography course, the creativity that lets one take an evocative shot comes from within.



He talked about the early 50s and 60s, when a photograph was the primary interface, the only visual reference for news. It was interesting how he explained concepts in photography to the students in a way that they could understand- he talked about how memory operates as a series of images, and how much a photograph can actually convey and add to plain text, which codifies the visual element.

He then took questions on the difference between photojournalism

in newspapers and magazines.

The question of ethics as a photographer taking photographs during the time of war or calamity was also raised. “The moment you put your camera to your eye, you become an extension of the camera itself...one needs to experience the moment, yet professionally, detach himself/herself from it,” he explained. Issues of perspective, how to really get behind the lens and understand the situation so as to portray it suitably in a photograph and so on, were also discussed.

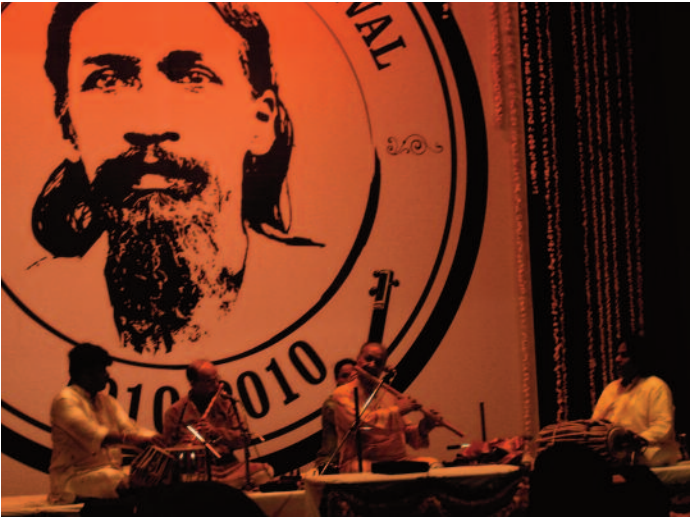
In addition, Mr. Bandeep Singh took questions about his recent work, *Antarghat*-a photography exhibition in Puducherry, under the overarching theme of Sa: The Feminine. It is a creative exploration of the idea of the feminine form, in the Indian aesthetic tradition. The play of light and shadow, as well as the symbolism of the clay pot in the photographs made them a work of art. Some students were interested to learn about the technical aspects of his photographs, and Mr. Singh explained the processes.

Sharing lighter moments with the students, he talked about his college days and asked the students about their experiences as Mass Communication students. He also offered some suggestions for THE INQUIRER, on how it could be improved upon. Overall, it was an extremely thought-provoking interaction with an energetic and dynamic photographer.

Nandini

Culture Briefs

A three-day Carnatic and Hindustani classical music festival was held at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Theatre from March 26-28 to commemorate the Centenary of Sri Aurobindo’s Arrival in Pondicherry. The audience was enthralled by stalwarts, such as Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia (Flute - Hindustani), Uday Bhawalkar (Vocal - Hindustani), Bombay Jayashri (Vocal - Carnatic), R. Vidya Bharathi (Vocal - Carnatic), ‘Kalaimamani’ S. Kasim & S. Babu (Nadhaswaram - Carnatic), Murad Ali Khan (Sarangi - Hindustani).



Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia (third from left) at the music festival

Nritya Bharati, a two-day classical dance festival was held at JIPMER Auditorium from Feb. 27-28. It was organised by Sri Geetagoinda Pratisthana and saw six solo performances comprising new choreographies by leading artistes: Priya Venkatraman (Bharatnatyam), Bimbavati Devi (Manipuri), Gopika Verma (Mohiniattam), Hari (Kathak), Sharmila Biswas & Aruna Mohanty (Odissi).

Butoh: Dance communes with Nature

It is often said that an artist creates his own space. Indeed, Atsushi Takenouchi, a Butoh dancer from Japan made this very evident with his unique performance in the courtyard at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on Feb. 10. The backdrop was simple- a couple of trees around which Takenouchi gave his creative performance. His movements were fluid, simple and symbolized man’s relationship with nature. The dance was accompanied by natural sounds with instruments made from stones, sea shells, bamboo and bells played by musician Komiya Hiroko.

“Butoh is based on the concept of an old Japanese word called *Jinen*. It is a dance form that communes with nature; it is like dancing with the flow of the universe, celebrating it,” explained Takenouchi. This idea was clear as one watched the performance- consisting of improvisations that just seemed to

come from within, in a series of spontaneous, subtle movements.

It is interesting to note that the inspiration for their work came

when Hiroko and Takenouchi interacted with disabled children and were fascinated by how much mere bodily expressions and sounds can convey, and how one need not ‘plan’ or ‘fix’ melodies and dance steps. This influenced Takenouchi’s dance as well as Hiroko’s use of simple instruments derived from nature. Their ongoing experiments have resulted in performances such as this. The graceful movements accompanied by very primal, earthy rhythms made for a mesmerizing show, and left many enthralled.



(top) Atsushi Takenouchi presents Butoh, (below) mu.3sician Komiya Hiroko explains about the musical instruments; Atsushi Takenouchi & Komiya Hiroko.



Photos: Bagalavan

Balasubbulakshmi & Nandini

Ziskakan: Transcending music

It has often been said that music needs no language to be appreciated- music is universal in its language of giving energy, stirring something deep within and enthusing people.

Ziskakan is a Creole band from the island of La Réunion. Formed in 1979, it is headed by Gilbert Pounia (vocals and guitar), Rouben Savariaye (tabla and drums), Gerard Clara (vocalist and drummer), Pascal Manglou (electric guitar), Jean Raddiga (keyboard), and Gerard Parame (drums). Their music aims to preserve Creole culture, identity and tradition, and present its complexity and richness



to the world.

A little known fact about the lead vocalist, Gilbert Pounia is that though he's from the La Réunion islands, he's of Tamil origin. The band launched a magazine as well as a radio station to promote Creole language and culture. Early in their career, they covered other areas of performing arts as well, such as

BONJOUR, INDIA!

A taste of French cultural exuberance

The Bonjour India festival was a perfect example of two cultures converging, exchanging ideas, traditions and art forms as well as appreciating and learning more in the process. The festival, consisting of over 200 events spanning most major cities in India, had a special resonance here in Pondicherry, with its past as a French colony as it formed the



perfect backdrop for this Indo-French celebration of cultures.

From Dec. 10 to Jan. 27, the fest in Pondicherry covered French film screenings, talks by eminent French writers, exhibitions by French artists and photographers as well as cultural programmes and concerts. A few highlights of the Festival include the

theatre, dance, and storytelling.

They were here in Pondicherry recently, to perform at a concert at the Bonjour India Festival, on Jan. 22 at the Old Port. The band was very interactive with the audience, and lively in its music. It was reminiscent of gypsy music, with a very rustic feel, accompanied by dancers in traditional attire. The mood was relaxed, and fun, as quite a few in the audience joined in the dancing on stage. The music had elements of fusion in it as well, with Indian *taal* being incorporated, and tablas being used as instruments. The songs were in both Creole and Malagasy (the language spoken in Madagascar),

and seemed to blend the untamed expression of African music, the beautifully crafted melodies and beats of Indian Classical music, and the essence of Creole culture. A lot of French locals in the audience seemed to connect with the music, and the concert ended on a colourful and hopeful note of more tours in India in the future.

Nandini

Puducherry Ability Mela



An Ability Mela was organised on Feb. 20, near the Gandhi statue on Beach Road by the Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Handicapped (VRC) under the aegis of the Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Government of India.

The VRC is one of 20 centres across the country which provide training and also identify jobs and place its trainees in different areas of work depending on their interests and skills along with providing Career Counselling and Guidance.

Differently abled persons from the age group of 15-50 years are eligible to apply for training here. Vocational courses on offer here include General Mechanics, Computer Applications, General Electronics, Dress Making and Automobile Mechanism. Trainees are given a stipend of Rs. 100/- as per their days of attendance.

The fair showcased crafts created

by the students and trainees at the VRC. Many young students from NGOs such as SADAY (Centre for Special Attention-Deserving Adaptable Youngsters), Satya Special School and ARUNIM (Association for Rehabilitation under National Trust Initiative for Marketing) were also present.

The fair demonstrated the capabilities of the differently abled, who are given the opportunity and skills to earn their own livelihood and lead fulfilling lives. It was heartening to see young students from the Satya school and Saday at the fair, enjoying lighter moments with their teachers, and interacting with the visitors. Young Venkatesan, from one of the schools was fascinated by this reporter's camera, though shy initially, and liked having his picture taken. The atmosphere was that of warmth, joy and support among the students and trainees, and all the visitors to the Ability Fair appreciated the beautiful crafts and products on display.

Nandini

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The charm of Fashion!



Pondicherry Fashion Weekend 2010, which took place at The Sunway GRT Grand was a huge success as it drew praise from several international tourists.

The designing was done by Sandeep and Pritam, best known for their assistance in designing the costumes of the film 'Jodhaa Akbar' and the event was choreographed by Dalu, the livewire of all major fashion shows in South India, such as Miss South India, Miss Kerala, Miss

Tamil Nadu and Miss Andhra Pradesh.

The show was sponsored by Warehouse, Tequila, Naturals Family Salon, Globus Wine and The Sunway GRT Grand, with SS Music being the media partner and Big FM the radio partner.

Nine models, the majority being from Bangalore and Chennai, walked the ramp for Sandeep and Pritam. The show was followed by a party and a DJ Night.

Vishnu



Nandini